

# At the Foot of the Candle, It is Dark: Kyunggi Province News Coverage in Korean Terrestrial Broadcasting\*

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This research aimed to analyze the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of Kyunggi province news reporting by the 3 major terrestrial TV stations in Korea. For this, news content analysis, audience survey, and in-depth interview were carried out. First, the content analysis shows that Kyunggi news is quantitatively insufficient compared to Seoul news. Kyunggi news was mainly composed of simple police case/accident news, lacked diversity and revealed a relatively high ratio of negative orientations. Second, the audience survey show the demand for Kyunggi news was high, but the major terrestrial broadcasting news did not correspond to it. Third, the in-depth interviews of news reporters show why the Kyunggi news came to have such problems. There are physical constraints such as coverage limits with several reporters covering a vast area, and the broadcast

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media characteristics of limited time slots of news. However, the more important factor is that news value decisions centered on “national-level influence” result in passive awareness of the importance of Kyunggi local news. Despite recent awareness of the importance of Kyunggi news, without enhanced manpower and allocation of news time slots, Kyunggi local news will not be able to overcome its limits.

**Key Words: local broadcasting news, quantity, quality, Kyunggi Province**

## 1. Introduction

Kyunggi province is an area of Korea with 10 million residents (app. 1/4 of the whole Korean population) and producing about 20% of the Korean GDP. It is commonly referred to as one metropolitan area together with Seoul and Incheon due to the fact that Kyunggi is geographically adjacent to Seoul and its cities such as Ilsan, Bundang and Gwachon constitute an integrated socio-economic living space with Seoul. However, this is true only for some of its bordering areas and not for Kyunggi province as a whole. Kyunggi is comprised of many diverse sociocultural areas with the province capital, Suwon in the center, Gapyong and Yangpyong to the east, Pyongtaek and Ansong to the south, and Pochon and Yonchon to the north.

It has been pointed out that Kyunggi residents are in a relatively disadvantaged condition compared to those of other provinces regarding broadcast news production and consumption. While other provinces have local broadcasting stations in their major cities, Kyunggi is practically dependent upon the stations located in Seoul due to its geographic proximity.<sup>1)</sup> The three major stations (KBS, MBC, and SBS) in Seoul

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1) For example, there are no Kyunggi KBS or Kyunggi MBC that are the equivalents of Busan MBC or KBS Busan. Though SBS had started off as the first local

function as the key stations of the nationwide networks as well as of the local stations specialized for Seoul and Kyunggi. Therefore their news programs take the role to provide local news of Seoul and Kyunggi as well as national news.

However, the news reporting of these stations tends to focus on Seoul, leaving out Kyunggi. As a result of being proximate to Seoul, Kyunggi neither possesses its own broadcast news media nor is it well covered in news programs of Seoul-based stations. Literally, with regard to broadcast news, Kyunggi province can be compared to the “dark area at the foot of the candle.” This research will look more deeply into this phenomenon and discuss how to improve this situation.

## 2. Literature review and analysis frame

Broadcast news has been one of the extensively investigated topics in the communication discipline (Berstein & Lacy, 1992; Buckalew, 1969; Carroll, 1989; Collins, 1980; Fowler & Showalter, 1974; Hofstetter & David, 1986; Stempel, 1988 & 1985; Stone et al., 1987; Wicks & Walker, 1993). A brief survey of the existing research on the broadcast news of Korean terrestrial TV stations also shows quite an extensive list of studies (Bae, 2002; Kang, 1990; Kang & Hong, 2005; Kim, 2003; Han & Seol, 2001; Lee, 2004; Lee

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private station that encompassed Seoul and parts of the Metropolitan area, it became practically a nationwide station after 2000 due to its continued expansion of networking with other local private stations. In 1997, iTV was established as a local broadcast station covering Incheon and the adjacent Kyunggi area, but its operation was limping from the beginning. It failed in license renewal in 2005. To find a replacement wasn't easy at all. Only at the second attempt under heavy intervention of the Korean Broadcasting Commission (KBC) in late April 2006, was a new licensee station selected.

& Hwang, 2004; Lim, 2002; Son, 1999; Yang & Lee, 2005; Yoo, 1994; Youn, S. et al., 2004).

Broadcast news analysis focusing on the Kyunggi area, however, is hard to find. Considering the importance of Kyunggi, it can be said that the “foot of the candle phenomenon” prevails even in academic research.

The basic starting point when analyzing broadcast news is to describe what kind of news is being aired. In past studies, the news categories for the basic content analysis tended to be set in conventional ways or for convenience’s sake. The analysis was usually limited to content analysis of the news programs as the final product, showing little interest in why they were being produced that way and how they were being consumed.

To diagnose problems in news programs and propose practical solutions, a comprehensive and multi-layered analysis of news production and consumption processes is required along with a precise description of the news programs themselves. In this vein, this research aims to analyze the broadcast news on Kyunggi in three layers: 1) the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of Kyunggi broadcast news, 2) the expectation for and consumption of Kyunggi news by Kyunggi residents, and 3) the production process of Kyunggi news.

First of all, this study conducted a content analysis to describe the quantity and quality of Kyunggi area news by 3 major terrestrial broadcast stations with some modifications from the existing broadcast news studies. The modifications are as follows:

### 1) Measuring the quantity of the news coverage

In existing broadcast news studies, the definition of local news is ambiguous. The first thing that needs to be clarified to measure the quantity

of Kyunggi news is its very definition. First of all, Kyunggi news would include news that arose from that particular geographical region. But if we look closer, even if the news event happened somewhere else, news that deals with Kyunggi area related figures should be regarded as Kyunggi news. Moreover, if the main theme of the news is related to the Kyunggi area, it would not matter where the news event happens or who the central figure is in it. For example, news on the “Kyunggi World Ceramic Biennale” held in Seoul would be classified as Kyunggi news. This research considers all these three conditions of ‘geographic origin,’ ‘locality of main figure’ and ‘locality of the theme’ as valid.

## 2) Measuring the qualitative aspects of the news coverage

There can be many ways to assess the qualitative aspects of news contents, but the simplest categorizations would be diversity and depth. Diversity refers to the degree of how many diverse items are dealt with concerning Kyunggi province, while depth refers to how intensively each news item is dealt with. For analyzing diversity, previous studies have used news categorizations such as politics, economics, society and culture, etc., which often are different from the actual news categorizations of the news producers. In this context, this research implemented a new categorization scheme that reflects the actual sub-divisions or branches of the broadcast stations’ news organizations.<sup>2)</sup> Additionally, the orientation of the news

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2) For this purpose, this research consulted reporters of three major broadcast stations with over 5 years of experience. As a result, ‘political news’ could be subdivided into ‘national politics/central admin news’ and ‘local admin/area issue news’. Also, ‘Social news’ was divided into ‘prosecutor/court news’ and ‘police/fire dept news.’ On the other hand, international news and North Korea related news were merged into ‘diplomatic/unification/security/defense news’ since they were covered by the same sub-division.

articles (positive, negative, neutral) was measured.<sup>3)</sup> As for depth, the continuity of the news reports (whether a news item is a standalone item or is followed by subsequent items), the completeness (whether a news item is simply presenting facts or includes in-depth assessments), and the presentation method (whether a news item is presented with a simple accompanying image or with various reference materials) were analyzed.

Secondly, this research investigated Kyunggi area residents. This was to find out how much interest the Kyunggi area residents have in local news, and to which degree current news programs satisfy this interest. A survey on their media use pattern, the need for local news and the gratification level from the actual broadcast news viewing was conducted.

Thirdly, this research attempted to look into the Kyunggi area news production process of the 3 major broadcast stations. For this, three Kyunggi area news reporters from the three stations were interviewed in-depth.

### 3. The quantity and quality of Kyunggi news: news content analysis

A content analysis was conducted to find out the ratio of Kyunggi area news in the overall news programs and their qualitative characteristics (e.g., diversity and depth). For sampling, 40 days were randomly selected throughout the period ranging from January 2004 to December 2005, taking the date and day of the week into consideration. Through the internet VOD services of each station's website, a total of 8,063 news items were

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3) The negative news category includes conflict, dispute, corruption, crime and accidents, etc., while the positive one, praiseworthy anecdotes, cooperation, future visions, and development, etc.

extracted from the major news programs of morning/evening prime times. The coding was done by ten undergraduate senior students majoring in communication. Inter-coder reliability was .97 on average.

### 1) Quantity of news

<Table 1> overviews the relative amount of Kyunggi province news compared with that of other area news (Seoul, other domestic areas excluding Seoul and Kyunggi, and international news) for the last two years. As was discussed previously, the locality of the news was measured by 'geographic origin,' 'locality of the main figure' and 'locality of the theme.'

In terms of the geographical origin of the news reports, Seoul area news was 3,643 cases accounting for 45.4% of the total, while Kyunggi area news was 337 cases with 4.2% of the total. Comparing Seoul area news with Kyunggi area news, Seoul received ten times more coverage.

<Table 1> Number of news reports by area (total)

Measure	Seoul	Kyunggi	Domestic (excl. Seoul /Kyunggi)	Inter- national	Not specified	Total
Geographical Origin*	3,643 (45.4%)	337 (4.2%)	1,710 (21.3%)	1,872 (23.3%)	466 (5.8%)	8,028 (100%)
Locality of the Main Figure**	379 (14.3%)	90 (3.4%)	1,451 (54.7%)	550 (20.7%)	182 (6.9%)	2,652 (100%)
Locality of the Theme***	616 (7.7%)	237 (3.0%)	5519 (68.7%)	1,498 (18.6%)	163 (2.0%)	8,033 (100%)

\*35 cases of missing data omitted.

\*\*5,411 cases where main figure is not specified omitted.

\*\*\*30 cases of missing data omitted.

Also, news items with Seoul area as the place of origin were twice as numerous as the international and other domestic area news (excluding Seoul and Kyunggi). Meanwhile, Kyunggi area news was only 4.2% of the total. Considering that the Kangwon area is only 1/7 that of Kyunggi in population but still comprised 2.2% of the news reports, news coverage of Kyunggi is small even compared to that of the other provinces. This gap becomes even larger considering that, in the other local chapters of the three major terrestrial stations, 8 to 15 news items are aired every day during the 'local news time.'

Seen by the locality of the main figure, the domestic news (excluding Seoul and Kyunggi) was 1,451 cases (54.7% of the total). Seoul area news was 379 cases with 14.3% of the total, and Kyunggi area news was 90 cases (3.4%). Kyunggi area news was only 1/4 of the Seoul area news in this standard.

Looking through the most conservative measure of the locality of the theme, domestic (excluding Seoul and Kyunggi) news was 5,519 cases (68.7%). In this measure, Seoul area news comprised 616 cases (7.7%) while Kyunggi area news comprised less than half this with 237 cases (3.0%).

## 2) Quality of the news

The qualitative characteristics of the news reports were categorized into diversity and depth. Results are as follows.

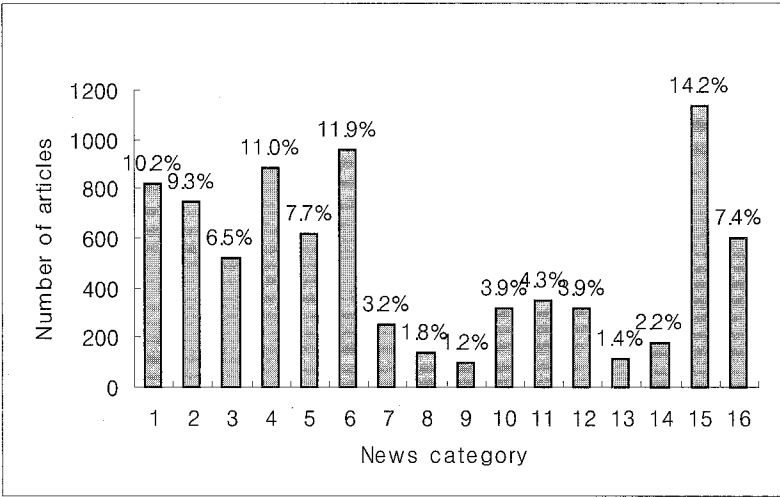
### (1) diversity

<Fig. 1> shows the overall composition of news contents based on the news categorization to assess diversity. Among the 16 news categories,



international news was the most covered category with 1,139 cases (14.2%). It was followed by police/fire department news with 954 cases (11.9%), economic news with 884 cases (11.0%), domestic politics/national administration news with 815 cases (10.2%), and diplomatic/unification/security/defense news with 744 cases (9.3%).

<Fig. 2> represents the composition of Seoul news based upon the same



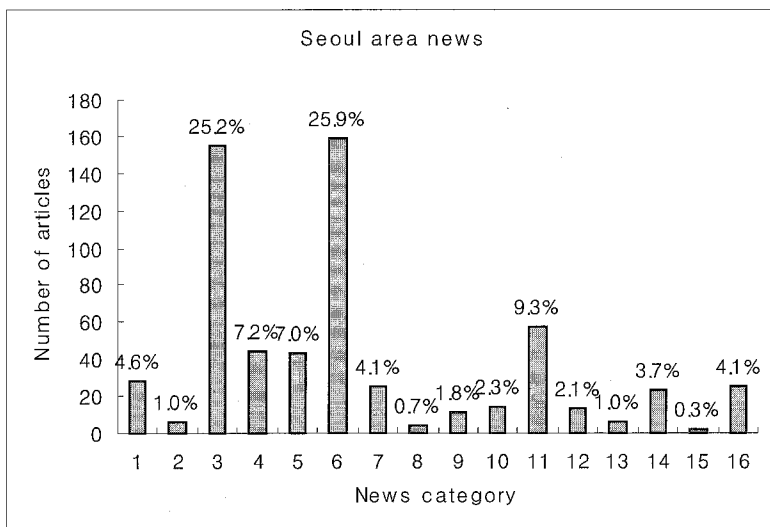
1	Domestic politics, central administration	9	Environment
2	Diplomatic, unification, security, defense	10	Health and welfare
3	Local administration, local issues	11	Culture and arts
4	Economy	12	Science and technology
5	Prosecutor, court	13	Sports
6	Police, fire department	14	Living, Weekend, anecdotes
7	Education	15	International news
8	Labor	16	Others

<Fig. 1> News articles by category (total).

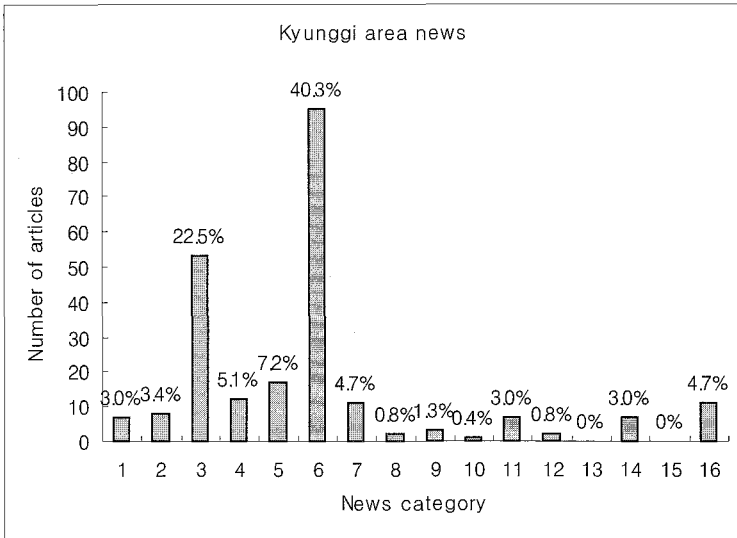
news categories. Police/FD news was the most covered category with 159 cases (25.9%) and local administration/issues was the second most covered category with 155 cases (25.2%), while the other news categories such as culture and arts news (57 cases, 9.3%), economy news (44 cases, 7.2%), and prosecutor/court news (43 cases, 7.0%) show moderate level frequencies.

<Fig. 3> shows the composition of Kyunggi news. The overall pattern of the news composition looks similar to that of Seoul news. However, by closely comparing <Fig. 3> with <Fig. 2>, we can find clear differences between Seoul and Kyunggi news in terms of news diversity. Kyunggi news mostly consists of police/FD news (95 cases, 40.3%), and local administration/ issues (53 cases, 22.5%). Since Kyunggi area news deals with accident/ administration related issues so heavily, coverage of other diverse themes such as culture and arts, the economy, etc., seems relatively hindered.

Another aspect of news diversity investigated by this study is the



<Fig. 2> Number of news articles by category (Seoul).



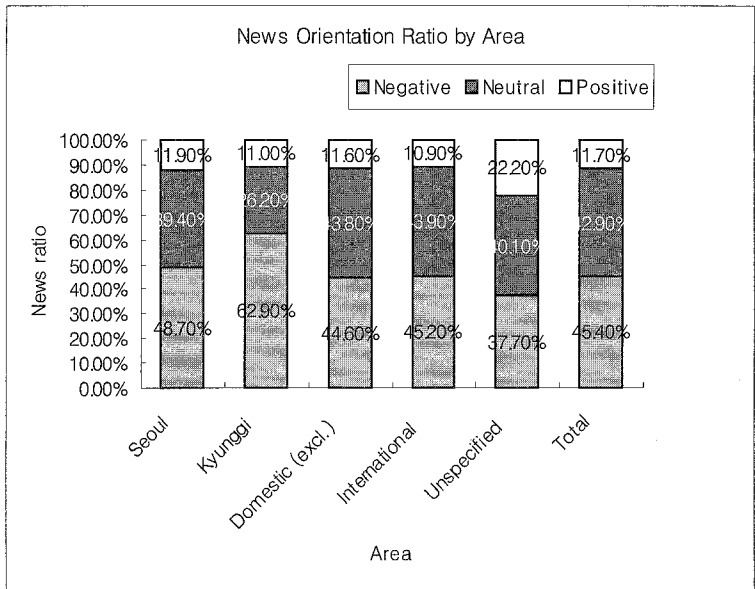
<Fig. 3> Number of news articles by category (Kyunggi).

orientation of the news (positive/negative/neutral). For the total news items, negative news items summed to 3640 cases (45.4%), neutral, 3,436 cases (42.9%), and positive, 935 cases (11.7%) as seen in <Fig. 4>.

In Seoul area news, negative items were 299 cases (48.0%), neutral items were 242 cases (39.4%), and positive items were 73 cases (11.9%), the overall composition of which corresponds with the overall average in total. In the Kyunggi news' case, negative news items turned out to be 149 cases (62.9%), neutral items were 62 cases (26.2%), and positive items were 26 cases (11.0%), thus revealing a far higher ratio of negative news composition than that of the total and of Seoul area news.

## (2) Depth

This study tapped into the depth of the news reporting, by measuring the continuity, completeness and presentation methods of each news item. To measure the continuity, each item was checked for whether it was a



<Fig. 4> News Orientation (Negative, Neutral, and Positive) Ratio by Area.

standalone article (single news), or lay in the continued additional coverage from a previous article (multiple news), or belonged to a set of brief news (brief news).<sup>4)</sup>

For the total sample, ‘single news’ comprised 6,342 cases (79.1%), ‘multiple news’ comprised 1,117 cases (13.9%), and ‘brief news’ comprised 554 cases (6.9%). As for Seoul news, single news comprised 523 cases (85.0%), multiple news comprised 46 cases (7.5%), and brief news comprised 46 cases (7.5%). Kyunggi news consisted of 205 single news (86.5%), 16 multiple news (6.8%), and 16 brief news (6.8%). Therefore, in terms of continuity, not much difference was found between Seoul and Kyunggi news.

To look into the completeness of the news report, the items were divided

4) Brief news indicates a news item which usually delivers the simplest facts within a few seconds.

into five categories by checking whether a news item just introduced the current facts or conditions, or whether it included further analysis on the causes and implications of the case.<sup>5)</sup>

For the total sample, as was expected, fact-only reports turned out to be the largest (4,569 cases, 57.0%). Reports accompanied by analysis on the implications were 1,275 cases (15.9%), fact reports with analysis on both implications and cause were 1,214 cases (15.1%), and fact reports with analysis on cause only were 843 cases (10.5%). Seoul and Kyunggi news showed similar patterns. As for Seoul news, fact-only reports were 369 cases (60.1%), and fact+cause+implication reports were 107 cases (17.4%). Reports with fact+cause were 76 cases (12.4%), and fact+implication were 51 cases (8.3%). Kyunggi news had 136 cases (57.4%) of fact-only reports, while in-depth reports with fact+cause+implication were 34 cases (14.3%). The differences between Seoul and Kyunggi news in terms of news depth were ignorable overall.

As for the presentation of news reports, seven categories were set based on how many presentational methods were adopted in a news item.<sup>6)</sup> For the total sample, reporters with VTR screens were dominant with 3,518 cases (44.3%), followed by 2,613 cases of anchorpersons with VTR screens (32.9%) and 1,585 cases of reporters with both VTR screens and graphs (20.0%). As for Seoul news, reporters with VTR were 247 cases (41.4%), anchorpersons with VTR were 233 cases (39.1%), and reporters with VTR and graphs were 99 cases (16.6%). Kyunggi news consisted of 97 cases of anchorpersons with VTR (42.2%), 83 cases of reporters with VTR (36.1%),

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5) The five categories of completeness include (1) facts only, (2) facts+cause, (3) facts+implication, (4) facts+cause+implication, and (5) other (unclassifiable).

6) The categories include (1) anchorperson without any visual presentation, (2) anchorperson with VTR screen, (3) anchorperson with graphs, (4) reporter without any visual presentation, (5) reporter with VTR screen, (6) reporter with graphs, (7) reporter with VTR screen and graphs.

and 42 cases of reporters with VTR and graphs (18.3%), yielding a similar outcome.

In sum, the analysis of depth in news reporting in terms of continuity, completeness and presentation method, did not reveal significant differences between Seoul and Kyunggi news. These results show that the qualitative aspects of Seoul news and Kyunggi news vary in diversity and less so in depth.

#### 4. Actual demand, viewing and assessment of Kyunggi news

Along with the content analysis discussed above, a survey was conducted to look into the actual viewing patterns of the audience and their assessment of TV news. The survey consisted of a pretest and a main test. The pretest was given to petitioners who visited the city office of Anyang, Uijongbu and Paju during 27-28th February 2006. Trained interviewers teamed up in twos and conducted the survey. Potential problems were corrected based on the pretest results, and the main test was launched on 10th March 2006. In the main test, the area of interest was expanded to Ansan and Pyongtaek to reflect the mixed rural-urban characteristics of Kyunggi. Also, the sampling size was expanded to 600, which yielded 526 effective samples. For randomizing purposes, the interviewers were ordered to interview every fifth person who visited the city office petition desk. To avoid duplicate interviewees, the time of the survey interview was recorded.

As the result, among the 526 respondents, 54.0% were male, and 46.0% female. The age group was 4.2% teenagers, 36.5% in their 20's, 26.4% in their 30's, 24.7% in their 40's, 5.5% in their 50's, and 2.7% in their 60's and above. Compared to the overall population, the 20's aged were over-sampled, and the education level was higher than in the general viewer

poll. This might be due to the fact that the survey was conducted in the city office causing young educated people to be sampled more. However this did not significantly skew the overall analysis. In terms of the residential area, residents of the survey sites (Anyang, Uijongbu, Paju, Ansan and Pyongtaek) were mainly sampled. However, the collected sample included all 31 administrative area units of Kyunggido.

### 1) Media use pattern

The media use preference pattern among newspaper, TV, radio and Internet of Kyunggi residents varied throughout weekdays or weekend. In general, the most used media was the TV, followed by the Internet, radio and newspaper.

On an average weekday, media use time was 136.6 minutes for the Internet and 135 minutes for the TV, which was more than two hours each. Radio was 38.1 minutes, and newspaper 32.7 minutes. On any weekend day, TV use time increased to 191 minutes, which was about 1 more hour than on weekdays. All other media use time decreased. The Internet was 110 minutes, which was less than on weekdays by 25 minutes. Newspapers were 21.5 minutes and radio 18.1 minutes, which was a decrease of 11 and 20 minutes, respectively.

On the question of how much TV news one watches each day, 83.5% of the respondents answered moderately and above. The respondents thought that the most important media were the Internet (44.7%), TV (38.6%), and newspaper (14.4%). The reason that the Internet was regarded as the most important could be due to the fact that the status of the Internet as an information medium has been rising, but also that people in the 20's and 30's age groups were dominant (63%) in the sample.

As the main channel for receiving Kyunggi news, 35.7% answered TV, 27.9% newspaper, and 20.5% Internet, contrary to the generally conceived media importance of Internet-TV-newspaper. This points out that Kyunggi residents still rely on the TV and the newspaper for specific information, such as local news. Besides these, local bulletin papers and peers accounted for 6.7% each, with radio reaching 1.9%. Among other miscellaneous answers, there was also the mention of the local cable TV station.

## 2) TV news viewing pattern

Based on the news categorization scheme used for the content analysis, the respondents were asked to choose three news item categories in the order to which they pay most attention to them when watching TV news. As a result, the respondents answered 'economy' (16.4%), 'sports' (15.0%), and domestic politics/central administration. Interest was high in economy and politics, which have been generally considered as possessing high news value, while 'sports' reflect mostly the interest of the male respondents. They are followed by living/weekend/anecdotes (11.4%), culture & arts (8.2%) and education (6.9%), which have been traditionally regarded as soft news. It indicates that Kyunggi residents take an interest not only in themes of society in general but also in those of their everyday lives. Answers on 'prosecutor/court' and 'police/FD' didn't even reach 2%, which shows that interest in so-called corruption and accident news is low.

The survey also asked respondents to write open-ended answers discussing their dissatisfaction with Kyunggi news on terrestrial TV. The most frequent answers were 'too little local information', 'no diversity in themes', and 'too little quantity' with 22.0%, 21.9%, and 19.8% each, indicating dissatisfaction with the information, subject and quantity. Answers



such as 'too much negative news', 'not precise' followed with 12.4% and 11.2% each. 'Biased, skewed news' and 'imprecise information' were 7.6% and 5.0%.

### 3) Assessment on the news

This study asked respondents to assess the necessity for each area's news using a 5-point scale. Kyunggi news scored the highest with 3.75 points followed by Seoul news (3.58), and other domestic area news (3.53).

When measuring the satisfaction with each area's news in actual news programs, Seoul news scored the highest with 3.15 points. International news was 2.95, other domestic areas were 2.89, and Kyunggi news scored 2.80. Except for Seoul area news, news on other areas scored below 3 points. Kyunggi news, which scored the highest in necessity was marked the lowest in satisfaction, leaving a large gap. This result shows that Kyunggi residents have a high demand for local news, and are strongly dissatisfied with the status quo.

In terms of the satisfaction level with the quantity of the news on terrestrial TV, Seoul news scored highest with 3.40 points. It was followed by international news (2.83), other domestic areas (2.76), and finally Kyunggi news (2.68), indicating that Kyunggi residents think that Kyunggi news is the one most quantitatively lacking. On the question of how excellent the news reports are, Seoul news scored the highest with 3.24 points. All other areas scored only 2.87 points.

In summary, Kyunggi residents scored Seoul news highest in all quantitative and qualitative values. As for Kyunggi news, however, Kyunggi residents were far from satisfied quantitatively and qualitatively, contrary to the high values and demands they placed on it.

## 5. Structural limits of Kyunggi news production process: In-depth interviews with reporters

This study explored the structure and limits of the production process of Kyunggi news, from the viewpoint of the news producers. For this purpose, three reporters who were or who had recently been assigned to Kyunggi area coverage were interviewed in-depth. The interview was done via systematic questionnaires, and held for a session of 1 hour each in a comfortable setting with two researchers. After the face-to-face interview, additional data was collected through telephone and e-mail.

### 1) Kyunggi area reporting system of the terrestrial stations

#### (1) The position and reporting area of the reporter

All Kyunggi area reporters were positioned in the 'society' team. In the

<Table 2> Interview date and specification

Person	Date/place	Organization	Current position	Kyunggi area reporting experience
Reporter A	2006. 2. 7 Suwon branch reporter room	KBS	News HQ, news coverage team #3 (team chief, metropolitan area)	Apr 2005 - present
Reporter B	2006. 2. 10 Main office at Yoido, lounge	MBC	reporter, economy branch	Apr - Sep 2005
Reporter C	2006. 2. 13 Main office at Mokdong, lounge	SBS	team chief, news production team #1	Feb 2005 - Jan 2006

case of KBS, it was the 'society' team administrative affairs section, while MBC was the society division #2 metropolitan area team, and SBS was the national division case team. It is clear that all of them are basically 'police station assigned reporters', covering cases and accidents. The three stations maintain several branches in the Kyunggi area, however the locations and personal organization differs.

As for KBS, the Suwon branch is the center of Kyunggi area news reporting. There were 4 reporters assigned to the KBS Suwon as of May 2006. There was one reporter in the assistant manager position as the metropolitan area team chief, and the other three were field reporters. Though KBS does have sub-stations in Inchon, Uijongbu and Sunnam, it concentrates its reporters in Suwon rather than dispersing them.

The reporting area of Suwon comprises all 31 districts of Kyunggi. The metropolitan area coverage is largely divided into 3 areas: the southern area centered on Suwon, the western area centered on Inchon and the northern area centered on Uijongbu. Among those, the southern area of Seoul and western areas such as Inchon and Puchon are covered directly from Suwon, but in many instances reporters cannot go all the way to Uijongbu due to physical distance, in which case the main station at Seoul is notified to send it personnel out. However, the basic management of the northern area is still done by the Suwon branch.

The reporters at the Suwon branch, both the regular reporters and the assistant manager level reporter, stay there for about 1 to 1.5 years, and then return to the main station in Seoul. They are mostly starters with only 1-3 years of experience, and have previously been moved to other divisions where they gained the specialized skills they would need for covering the Kyunggi area. It was difficult to find any reporter assigned to the Kyunggi station who had a deep understanding of the locality. When reporting involves meeting the mayors or the provincial governor, or when covering

an important local policy/cultural issue, the assistant manager-level reporter takes charge and produces the news.

MBC differs in system from KBS. MBC's reporters for the Kyunggi area are 5 in total, but are dispersed throughout the branches in Suwon, Inchon, Uijonbu and Sungnam, and there is one additional assistant manager-level senior reporter in Suwon. The Kyunggi metropolitan area is divided into 4 large areas: the southern area centered on Suwon, the eastern area centered on Sungnam, the western area centered on Inchon, and the northern area centered on Uijongbu. Each branch is equipped with a basic broadcasting system, and is assigned a coverage support team consisting of a camera reporter, a sound engineer and a vehicle operator. The senior reporter is called the 'captain', and monitors all cases and accidents in Kyunggi. If needed, this person directs the reporters of each branch which item to cover.

Society team #2, where the Kyunggi area reporters are positioned, is basically dedicated to police cases and accidents. The reporters at the branches are starters with 1-2 years of experience only, and are rotated in a short term such as 6 months or 1 year. They lack the time to develop a deeper understanding of the locality. Though the senior reporter normally has 10 years of reporting experience, this is not the case with the Kyunggi area. The strong point of this is that the reporters can present more fair and objective views. When staying in one locality for a long time, private interest relationships grow, and the short-term rotation is an auxiliary safety system to prevent such.

(Reporter B) We are only staying here for 6 months or a year... That's our dilemma. When we are starting to have some special skills and understanding we have to move on, which is the bad thing. However, we can go some place new and write as we want free of relationships. It's hard to find a balance. 1 or 2 years are adequate, I think. If it goes over

two years, new relationships develop no matter where.

As for SBS, four reporters are presently stationed in the Kyunggi area. There are station branches in Suwon, Sungnam, Incheon and Uijongbu, with one reporter each. The covering areas are just like MBC. According to the organizational chart they are positioned in the main station national division, however in regard to their actual work they are almost identical to the 'society' coverage teams of the other companies.<sup>7)</sup>

The Kyunggi area reporters focus their attention on police cases and accidents, and are assigned to the police bureaus and administrative offices. However, unlike KBS and MBC, SBS does not assign a senior reporter to this area. The reporters receive all directives and news production plans from the main station in Seoul. Their positioning in the branch offices is only for the sake of geographical proximity.

In 2005, there was a temporary position of an assistant manager-level reporter in the SBS Suwon branch. It was a system similar to the one by MBC to plan and produce local news, but the change was undone as of

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7) SBS built society team #2 in their reporting division on 3rd April 1992 and took charge of metropolitan area news. However, after building local stations at Busan, Daegu, Daejeon and Kwangju, the name was changed to national division and covered other local news as well. With the opening of the local private stations in 1995, SBS temporarily closed down the local branches. However, news supply was not running smoothly as planned, and so SBS reopened the branches. Afterwards, it constructed a national network by 'giving drama and receiving news' with each local private stations. Currently SBS receives news from the local private stations and at the same time runs 5 own local branches in Busan, Daegu, Daejeon, Kangnung and Cheju to construct a solid national system. As the 'national' expansion progressed, its own definition as the local Seoul and metropolitan station grew weaker. On 17th March 2000, the company's name was legally changed from 'Seoul Broadcasting System' to just 'SBS'.

February 2006. The reason for this temporary enhancement of Kyunggi news for just one year could be explained as to fulfill the conditions for receiving KBC's recommendation for re-authorization at the end of 2004. In 2004, KBC requested as a condition for reauthorizing SBS, to expand programs reflecting locality (source: June 12, 2004 / 56th KBC Meeting Decision Papers).

Like the other stations, reporters of SBS do not stay in the Kyunggi area for long. The reporters are mostly first-year starters, and cover the area with the same mindset as they do the Seoul police departments or administrative offices. There cannot be expectations to have quality reports based on deep understanding of the locale.

## (2) Subject ideas and coverage process

As stated above, Kyunggi area reporters at all three stations are practically positioned under the society team of the main station. Thus reliance on police and fire departments is high. There are hundreds of police cases and accidents in the Kyunggi area, and in order for the small number of reporters to keep track of them they cannot but rely on the information given by the police or fire department. Based on this, the reporters select out newsworthy issues and send them to the main station, from among which one or two are selected. This task is simplistic at first glance, but is burdensome done on a daily basis. For them the seduction of a scoop is overpowered by the fear of falling behind.

The press packets from the local administrative offices are also an important news source. However, the level of utilization of official bureau material was overall low. The dissatisfactions can be summarized as two: first, valuable information is too little, and second it is overfilled with self-PR. It is helpful in keeping track of important things happening in the area and of what kinds of policies are being pursued by the officials, but

there are difficulties in making them directly into news reports.

(Reporter A) Therefore, the official press packets should only be used for basics, and the rest should be dug into on our own. The province office hands out at least three packets per day, but it is largely fruitless. It's completely self-PR.

(Reporter B) The PR division only gives out the information that is beneficent to them, and hides all the potential problems. I would be a very idle reporter if writing down only this.

(Reporter C) The quantity of information is not insufficient. But, they want only their own good. The data from the source cannot but be somewhat defective, so we must find the rest.

The current press packets are only used as auxiliary information. The reporter only receives minimum initial ideas from them and completely reconstructs them to make them newsworthy, or uses them as starting points to actively discover new material. The starting point of an issue can be local, but to make it newsworthy it must be expanded into a national issue. Here is an example:

(Reporter C) Before last year's Chusok, when the industrial clusters of Sihwa and Ansan gave their laborers a special bonus it became news in their own circle. Then the information comes from the Kyunggi office. The bonus was so and so. With the statistics that we received from the Kyunggi office, we go on to cover the factories of Ansan, as well as receiving the national statistics via the Ministry of Labor. Enhancing this, we start off with Ansan, take into account Kyunggi, but ultimately add up the national data to build a bigger picture. This is the way we enhance the data.

Also the local newspapers are a major source for keeping track of local events and issues. Calls from residents are also a basic source finding

measure taken by most journalism organizations. KBS Suwon branch has assigned a dedicated personnel for reader calls, and the newsworthy information among those is verified and covered by the reporter. Internet search can also be efficiently used to find local issues.

### (3) news production and reporting

There are distinct differences among the stations in their news production and reporting methods. As for KBS, the Suwon branch covers the whole province based on information provided by the provincial police. The southern area of the province is covered at this branch directly. News items are selected based on police reports, public office packets or internal planning and the reporters cover the material. The senior team chief acts as the desk editor and produces the completed news at the Suwon branch, which is then sent to the main station in Seoul. Though not having dedicated time slots in the main news, the Kyunggi news coverage of KBS has a significant level of autonomy.

However, while the northern area, including Uijongbu, is monitored in Suwon, the Seoul office is contacted to send a reporter, due to its physical distance. The reporter covers the material and returns to the office to produce the news, or if time does not permit simply sends the visuals through the Uijongbu branch. In this case, production responsibility is on the main station.

The desk team of the main station decides on when to air the Kyunggi area news. If it is a major issue, it goes on the 9pm main news. If it is not national or insufficient in timeliness, it is moved to morning or noon. The reporters at the Suwon branch produce at least one news item per day, and all of the produced items are aired, although differing in airing time. This is possible because the channel capacity and timing of KBS is larger than that of the other stations.



(Reporter A) All reports are aired. Sometimes it's 9pm News, sometimes 7pm Network News, sometimes it's Morning News, and recently sometimes Noon News. And we also have the KBS2. KBS has many slots, so everything covered can be digested. Covered but unaired, simply does not happen.

Unlike KBS, MBC branches do not completely produce the news to the end. The reporters are at the branches for proximity's sake, but the actual news production, including report writing, is done in Seoul. Reporters who have covered the issue under the directives of the captain in Suwon returns immediately to the Seoul main office where they edit the visuals and records the news. When the basic production is complete, the first-line desk editors, including the head of the society team, check the report and decide the airing according to the day's situation. The reporting directives come from the captain in Suwon, but the production and airing is decided at the desk in Seoul.

If a newsworthy case happens far away or late so that there is no time to return to the Seoul office, the visuals and the report are sent from the nearest branch. In this case, the final news production is done by the desk reporter in Seoul. In any case, the final production, edition and reporting is done by the desk in the main station. Because of this process, MBC's Kyunggi news comes into competition with the national news in deciding whether to air.

(Reporter B) For example, if there is information on homicide coming in from the Ansan police station, Suwon branch sends its reporter to Ansan. If the coverage is done before 2-3pm, that person returns to Seoul to produce the news. But if it happens 4-5pm, it gets 8pm even returning to the branch. Then we send the pictures from there right away. The report is written and recorded there and sent as well. When the company tells us to

correct here and there, we do it, read it once again and send it. Then somebody at the main station receives them all and combines pictures and audio. Then it airs in urgent cases.

SBS has the lowest level of autonomy in Kyunggi news production and reporting processes. Unlike KBS and MBC, there is no senior reporter at the first line and all stages, including direction, production and editing, are done by the society team of the main station. The reporters at the branches cover the police cases and accidents under the directions of the desk editors of the society team, and send off the visuals through the branches if needed. The news production is mostly done in Seoul, and the editing and airing decision is also done there. The reporter also visits the public office once a week to cover the routine administrative issues.

## 2) Structural limits of Kyunggi news production

As can be generally seen in the news coverage and production processes, there is a structural limit behind the quantitative and qualitative insufficiency of Kyunggi news. It can be divided into the physical and value-judgement factors.

<Table 3> Responsibilities of Kyunggi news production by stage

Company	Coverage	Production	Airing
KBS	Suwon branch	Suwon branch	Seoul main station
MBC	Suwon branch	Seoul main station	Seoul main station
SBS	Seoul main station	Seoul main station	Seoul main station

(1) Physical factors

Compared to the small number of reporters for the Kyunggi area (4 to 5), the geographical area they are to cover is broad. Under such a system, it is difficult to expect satisfactory news coverage. Compared to the fact that the terrestrial stations assign 4-5 reporters to each government branch and 2-3 reporters to each police station in the Seoul area, this shortage directly accounts for the quantitative shortage of Kyunggi news.

(Reporter A) With three people we can't do much, we would need ten to cover Kyunggi. Thus, we go to the big or important events, but skip the smaller ones. Those could be covered if we get more personnel and equipment. With more reporters comes more news item discoveries, and we can also go to the towns we haven't been able to cover.

(Reporter B) First, the number of reporters is too small. There are 2-3 people at the Mapo police station, but to cover this wide area ... the Suwon branch alone has to cover an awful lot, Suwon, Ansan, Pyongtaek, and Osan. Doing it alone does not make sense.

(Reporter C) We don't have the manpower. I'm already busy visiting the police stations. How can I go around and 'cover'?

Even when the reporter goes on-site, the long movement paths of the Kyunggi area impose time limits. This limits also the depth, a qualitative value of the news. With little time on hand, deep reporting is difficult. No matter how much news is produced, the channel to air them is limited. As the main news program of the stations, the 9pm or 8pm news is scheduled for 40-50 minutes. In non-metropolitan areas, there is a separate local time so that the national news gets cut off and the last 10-15 minutes are filled with locally produced news. In the metropolitan area, however, there is no such dedicated time frame, thus lacking physical time space for local news. During the time when other provinces air locally produced news, Seoul

continues to air national news. The insufficiency of physical time limits not only the time allocation but also the covering of individual items making it difficult for the reporter to delve much into each item.

Another physical restraint for Kyunggi news production is that cross-checking is difficult because there aren't any colleagues on the site. In the major news source sites in Seoul there are many reporters covering the same issue. It gives the opportunity to minimize the errors by comparing the coverage results. However, in the Kyunggi area, most coverage is done alone, lacking outside comparisons to check for errors. Thus new issues with greater risks are avoided while producing passive articles dependent on familiar sources such as police information reports. This can be a reason why quality news does not occur, especially taking into account that most Kyunggi area reporters are starters with little experience.

(Reporter B) In Kyunggi, there are hardly any reporters who do real coverage. Information is extremely limited, the sources. In Seoul, reporters discuss with one another. Triangular coverage can be done by integrating what this one has done and the other one has done, and it can be verified instantly. But in Kyunggi it is impossible because we lack manpower. This can be another reason for the insufficient news. (...) Once a Seoul news is on air, we can watch YTN and SBS and compare like that. "Hey, this is not right at this point, one of us is wrong. Let's check it over." But the provincial news is a lonesome one. If we get sued, that reporter is done, I'm done, and the manager is done as well. That's a burden, No cross-checking.

## (2) Value judgment factors

At the broadcasting stations, there is a lack of cognition that Kyunggi is an 'area'. The companies combine the Seoul, Kyunggi and Incheon areas into one under the name 'metropolitan area'. They allocate society team reporters from the main station, and thus actually lead the production of

police case/accident centered news. A tendency to acknowledge the importance of the Kyunggi area and make a change has started in some parts such as KBS, but as long as Kyunggi is the subject area of police station assigned reporters from the Seoul society section team, these limits are difficult to overcome.

(Reporter C) Compared to the immense access rights that the provincial residents have to their local information, the local information that the residents of Seoul, Kyunggi or Incheon can get through terrestrial news is incomparably little .... Such as what new policy focus is being emphasized in Kyunggi, or what events are being held for the local residents.

As can be seen in the coverage system of Kyunggi news, the produced Kyunggi news does not have its own dedicated time slots, and competes with the national items. The decision is made by the desk editors, but one of their most important value judgments is based on the 'national influence'. That is, if a news item is more appealing to the nation as a whole rather than to some local residents, and if a news item has stronger social implications, it has a greater chance of being aired on prime time. In this regard, Kyunggi news with 'locality' more often than not contradicts the news value of major broadcast stations located in Seoul.

## 6. Discussion

This research aimed to analyze the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of Kyunggi news reporting by the 3 major terrestrial TV stations in Korea. For this, a multi-layered analysis of actual contents, the consumers (audience), and the producers (broadcasting station reporters) of Kyunggi province news was carried out.

The result of the content analysis shows that Kyunggi news is quantitatively insufficient in all of the three dimensions of local news (geographic origin, locality of main figure, and locality of the theme). News quality analysis mainly tapped into diversity and depth and showed that there existed significant differences between Seoul and Kyunggi news in terms of news diversity. Kyunggi news was mainly composed of simple police case/accident news, lacked diversity and revealed a relatively high ratio of negative orientations. In terms of depth, which was measured by continuity, completeness and presentation methods, no significant differences between Seoul and Kyunggi news were found. This result can be understood as showing the constraints in news depth overall in Korean broadcast journalism.

According to audience survey, the demand of the Kyunggi residents for Kyunggi news was high, but the major terrestrial broadcasting news did not correspond to it. Kyunggi residents were discontent with the insufficient quantity and the lack of diverse themes in Kyunggi news. The responses indicated a high need for Kyunggi news, but the satisfaction level with the current Kyunggi news was the lowest in both quantity and quality.

Through the content analysis and survey, the “dark foot of the candle” phenomenon of Kyunggi news proved to be real. The in-depth interviews of news producers (reporters) show some important clues as to why the Kyunggi news of major terrestrial TV stations came to have such problems. Most of all, there are physical constraints such as the limits of the coverage with only a small number of reporters covering a vast area, and the broadcast media characteristics of limited time slots of news. However, the more important factor has to do with value judgment issues such as news value decisions centered on national-level influence with passive awareness of the importance of Kyunggi news as the result.

Recently, awareness of the importance of Kyunggi province has been

rising and so has the news coverage of this area. Policy and culture news are starting to get produced in addition to the police cases and accidents. Still, without enhanced manpower and allocation of news time slots, Kyunggi news will not be able to overcome its limits.

Though this research dealt with Kyunggi news of three major terrestrial broadcasting stations in Seoul, the implications are not confined to the TV news coverage of Kyunggi as a specific local area. It is highly likely that the news coverage of other local areas would reveal more or less similar quantitative and qualitative constraints as found in Kyunggi's case. Furthermore, this empirical investigation of the disparity in broadcast news can expand beyond the geographical areas to various socio-cultural institutions.

There are some methodological issues in this study which deserve special mention. First of all, the multi-layered definitions for local news, the news categorization schemes and the diversity and depth scales of news are the unique methodological inventions of this research, which can make the quantitative and qualitative description of broadcast news more valid and elaborated. Furthermore, the multi dimensional approach of combining content analysis, audience survey and news producer depth interviews turned out to be highly productive. Problems were identified from the news contents, validated through the audience and their causes were analyzed from the producers. By applying this type of multi-dimensional approach, we expect that researchers dealing with social communication issues can get to the diagnosis, and hopefully to the solution of the agenda at stake rather than sticking to the simple descriptions of problems.

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## &lt;Program schedules&gt;

KBS <http://www.kbs.co.kr/1tv/> or <http://www.kbs.co.kr/2tv/>

MBC <http://www.imbc.com/guide/schedule/area/index.html>

SBS [http://tv.sbs.co.kr/broadplan/formation\\_tv.jsp](http://tv.sbs.co.kr/broadplan/formation_tv.jsp)

최초 투고일 2006년 6월 20일

게재 확정일 2006년 8월 11일